State Board of Education
March 16, 2010
Item K

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Montpelier, Vermont

TEAM: Transformation & Innovation

ITEM: Will the State Board of Education vote to support the Vermont Department of Education's Race to the Top (RttT) application to the federal Department of Education, due June 2, 2010?

RECOMMENDED ACTION: That the State Board of Education vote to support the Vermont Department of Education's Race to the Top (RttT) application to the federal Department of Education, due June 2, 2010.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 16 V.S.A.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Continued discussion from the February 16, 2010 meeting

The potential is for up to $75 million over four years for state and local capacity building and implementation of school and district wide transformation efforts including the implementation of components of the Learning Expectations, Education Quality and Educator Quality sections of the *Opportunity to Learn* report. This includes:

- consistent statewide data systems,
- common standards and assessments,
- personalized learning approaches,
- common evaluation systems for teachers and principals,
- educator preparation, mentoring and leadership development programs,
- support for school improvement,
- early childhood efforts,
- STEM strategies, and
- secondary transformation strategies such as dual enrollment, distance learning opportunities, technology to support education.

COMMISSIONER'S RECOMMENDATION: The commissioner recommends that the Board support the submission of the Race to the Top (RttT) application.

STAFF AVAILABLE: Armando Vilaseca, Commissioner; Rae Ann Knopf, Deputy Commissioner for Transformation & Innovation

Transformative Education in Vermont
A Framework

"*Determination, energy, and courage appear spontaneously when we care deeply about something.*
We take risks that are unimaginable in any other context."
- *Margaret Wheatley*

Vermont Department of Education
Rae Ann Knopf
Deputy Commissioner
Education Transformation and Innovation
February 26, 2010

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The Challenge

Vermont is in its third year of a statewide education transformation effort. Working with a broad range of stakeholders, we have defined a mission and philosophy which recognizes Vermont learners as individuals with differing strengths and needs and Vermont educators as facilitators and guides in the learning process. This philosophy anticipates a dramatic expansion of learning opportunities for our young people so they might achieve the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in the 21st century and beyond.[1] Through this process we have come to understand education transformation not as an event or a strategy but as a *statewide commitment to providing a transformative education to every young person in Vermont*. A transformative experience is typically known as a positive, life-changing encounter. A great education should be a life-altering experience for our children.

Providing a great education however, means that we as educators must both build on the good work already being done and challenge ourselves to create the conditions to invite and sustain innovation; conditions that ensure the availability of a transformative educational experience for every Vermont learner over the coming decades. Sustaining this work necessitates we build a system designed for constant adaptation, innovation and improvement in the face of global and local influences.

> *We must stand at the beginning; clear in our mind with a willingness to be involved in discovery…it asks that we participate rather than plan.*
> - *Margaret Wheatley*

Even as we commit to strengthening and improving the quality of our system, we are faced with a severe economic crisis which limits available resources to support these changes. A new federal administration is pushing us concurrently to adopt far reaching goals for reforming education on a national scale in a compressed timeframe. In this time of scarce resources and expanding demand, our response to this challenge can only be to align competing priorities and efforts so they exist in support of one another. They should all exist ultimately in service to the goal of providing the best education possible for our children. If our greatest efforts do not fit in this paradigm, we have to ask ourselves if they are priorities at all.

[1]Vermont State Board of Education Transformation Policy Commission (2009). *Opportunities to Learn*. Vermont State Transformation Policy Commission Report 2009, p. 2, Vermont State Board of Education.

Vermont State Education Goals

As Vermont educators, we seek to ensure that every child graduates with an awareness of their own relevance in the world at large and the foundational knowledge and skills to pursue their aspirations.[2] Every child in Vermont should complete their education by meeting high expectations in the 21st Century knowledge and skills essential for success in college, careers, and citizenship.[3]

Simply put, every child must:

- Have an opportunity to learn in 21st Century learning environments.
- Graduate high school having achieved proficiency in reading, math, science, writing and 21st Century skill development.
- Be well prepared to enter college or training in a career of their choosing.

According to the State Board of Education Strategic Plan (draft 12/09), we will:

- Develop and implement defined learning expectations that align with 21st Century skill demands and desired outcomes for public education.
- Promote and support a learning culture and teaching and learning practices that anticipate multiple ways of learning and yield deep understanding and applications of core concepts and skills on the part of students.
- Provide assessments that offer comprehensive and ongoing options for learners to demonstrate proficiency and plan next steps.
- Address education system structures – including funding, governance and accountability – that support the attainment of our desired vision for the education system in Vermont.

Achieving these goals requires of us a bold new way of addressing problems old and new. We must hold on to a different vision for education that lives at the heart of our work – having new learning expectations for all learners, embracing new and multiple ways of deep learning and

[2] Vermont Race to the Top Steering Committee Meeting Notes
[3] Vermont State Board of Education Mission and Draft Strategic Plan Goals

understanding, providing challenge and individual opportunity through proficiency based education, and insisting on equity in education outcomes.[4]

While graduation, proficiency and 21st century success are all key outcomes of our work, we know all learners in Vermont do not advance successfully in the current educational paradigm. In order to address this problem effectively, we must be willing to dig deeper to understand how we might change our approach to teaching and leading in order to accomplish these goals for every Vermont learner. Times are different for our young people, our teachers, our principals, our communities and our department. External factors are affecting our schools in ways we do not yet fully grasp. Therefore, we must continually explore these changes to understand how they are influencing the learning process. We must create a system that compels necessary adaptation and innovation over time. This is how we will continue to provide the high-quality education for which our state is known, creating communities where all learners thrive.

Our Greatest Strengths Present Unique Challenges

Historically we are known for innovation in education, small school communities, low student teacher ratios, and high inclusion rates for children with disabilities. Over the last ten years however, we have experienced an eighteen percent decline in student population and a ten percent decline in inclusion rates while special education costs have more than doubled during that same period. By 2030 the number of seniors in our state is expected to eclipse the number of children under eighteen by twenty-five percent. Our educational structures have not adjusted to these changes. Currently we have a 5:1 staffing to student ratio and an 11:1 teaching ratio, with para-educators to teachers being 1:2.[5] The average school district size in Vermont is 341 students. Eighty-five percent of our schools have fewer than 500 students. Thirty-two percent of our schools have fewer than 150 students. Only fourteen towns have more than 8,000 people with the largest having 38,000 residents. Yet, we are in the top five states for student achievement. While most states are now working to have lower teacher student ratios and smaller schools, we find there is such a thing as too small and too geographically disbursed to provide the kinds of learning opportunities we want our children to have. More importantly, we find that in our own state these demographics have not translated to improved achievement levels

[4] Vermont State Board of Education, Opportunities to Learn Vermont State Transformation Policy Commission Report. (2009), p. 6.
[5] Vermont Department of Education.

for our most disadvantaged students. We have a system that does not easily adjust to the issues surrounding declining student enrollment or readily adopt new practices to improve learning and is economically unsustainable. Also for many reasons, standard approaches using federal incentive grants and charter entities to reform education and raise achievement levels for student sub-groups are a poor contextual fit for our state.

Only when we disaggregate our student achievement data do we get to the heart of the issue. We know for example that like most other states, Vermont children who live in poverty and with disabilities or are English language learners in large part under-perform in core subject areas. And while we have poverty and minority populations, these young people are in many cases spread out across our state without the numbers or concentration of urban centers or larger states. For this and other reasons mentioned above, we believe Vermont to be a great incubator for developing and scaling models for improving schools and closing achievement gaps for learners who live in low population rural states.

To further our understanding of the issues facing Vermont educators, we conducted our own research study, *Roots of Success: Effective Practices in Vermont Schools* (2009)[6]. A major result of this study was the identification of key features of successful schools within Vermont and its rural context. The schools in this study consistently beat the odds, with students in poverty and with other disadvantages performing at the highest achievement levels despite their circumstances. As such, this information has become a key component of our reform platform. This report tells a story. The story is that even though Vermont outperforms most states in popular national measures, we know we have young people whose educational needs are not being met. The story is that we don't accept the notion of the bell curve and we believe it is a moral imperative to be purposeful about instituting practices that result in effective teachers and principals who can pay attention to the learning achievements of all their students within the context of their communities. These schools provide both high expectations for learning and the kinds of environments in which those expectations are actually achieved. In hindsight, the findings are not surprising – reinforcing research conducted in other countries and states – but they also confirm what many of us recognize by experience. Ensuring every child learns and

[6] The Vermont Department of Education, Roots of Success, *Effective Practices in Vermont Schools*, (2009).

excels comes down to four factors: 1) expectations for learning and teaching, 2) leadership, 3) school culture and 4) family engagement.[7]

More specifically, the schools that were successful in ensuring all children were able to learn and thrive in their communities had the following eight attributes of effective systems:

1. **High Expectations** – they believe that all students can succeed.
2. **Continuous Improvement** – they take responsibility for students' achievement and therefore work to continually improve their own practice.
3. **Leadership** – they are guided by strong leadership.
4. **Use of Data** – they use data in an ongoing way to provide feedback to staff, as well as monitor and support students.
5. **Professional Teaching Culture** – they establish a professional teaching culture that supports high quality instruction.
6. **Student Supports** – they have a comprehensive and highly functioning support system in place to address student's academic, emotional, behavioral and social needs.
7. **School Climate** – they create a supportive climate that makes all students, as well as adults, feel valued and safe.
8. **Family Engagement** – they build constructive relationships with families and involve them in their child's learning.

From Theory to Practice

Admittedly, establishing a coherent framework with these features in our schools takes time, consistent leadership and school-wide engagement. Having all schools in Vermont fully embody these attributes will take support, commitment and a sense of shared responsibility and leadership from all of us – the department, the State Board, the Legislature, leaders and members of the community, the Governor, educators, parents and students.

> *"In theory there is no difference between theory and practice In practice, there is."*
> *- Yogi Berra*

[7]The Vermont Department of Education, Roots of Success, *Effective Practices in Vermont Schools*, (2009).

Our work must prioritize the best characteristics of implementation at all levels by[8]:

- Aligning innovations to the goals, culture and capacity of our organizations and each other.
- Establishing fluency in the innovation(s), understanding the "what," the "how," and the "why" of the changes throughout our schools, not just at the top.
- Understanding the stages of implementation and implications for practice.
- Building implementation capacity, including resources, systemic adaptation to support changes and high-leverage policy to drive change.
- Systemic reflection and adaptation – the ability to measure what is working and what is not, and the willingness to continue what is working and discontinue what is not.

To move beyond pilots and demonstration sites, these efforts must be connected to key strategies for sustaining and scaling up best practice across the state, starting where it matters – at the interface between teachers and students. We must answer the questions:

  - What needs to happen at the classroom level so educators can interact with learners as intended?
  - At the school level?
  - At the district/supervisory union levels?
  - At the state level?

To effectively support and implement Vermont education system changes, we must recognize and respond to the real barriers to change. It is not that people resist change, but that people resist things like loss, incompetence, and disloyalty that they perceive accompany that change.[9] Our teachers, principals, leaders and staff are experiencing: a) loss of old ways of doing things, b) fear of being incompetent in a new environment or responsibility, and c) concern over changing relationships, expectations and loyalties in the new system, structure or ways of working. In order to overcome these concerns, we must continue to engage them in the process of creating the change and redefining structures and support systems to compel and reinforce the change.

[8] National Implementation and Research Network (2005), *Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature. Blasé, Karen A.; Fixsen, Dean L.; Friedman, Robert M.; Naoom, Sandra F.; Wallace, Frances.* University of South Florida

[9] West Wind Education Policy, Inc., Iowa Department of Education, (2009).

State Board of Education Transformation Policy Commission

Recognizing that moving from theory to practice requires systemic change and an interconnected policy framework to support and drive the change, the State Board of Education formed the Education Transformation Policy Commission in March 2009 to advise the Board in forming the framework. This commission, comprised of educators, legislators, organizational leaders, school board members, students and parents, put forth the following high leverage policy recommendations:

1. **Learning Expectations** – Redefine learning standards so they are aligned with 21st century performance demands and are fewer, higher and deeper.
2. **Student Assessments** – Align assessments with 21st century skills and shift when and how assessments are conducted.
3. **Teaching and Learning Practices** – Establish a teaching and learning model that emphasizes deeper learning, in-depth interdisciplinary applications, and required proficiency demonstrations, and require proficiency-based grading and graduation.
4. **Personalized Learning** – Establish a flexible education system that can support each learner to achieve at high levels.
5. **Educator Quality** – Design educator licensing, professional development, career ladders, evaluation and working conditions to support transformed educational practice.
6. **Systems and Structures** – Establish governance, funding, policies and learning structures to support 21st century education goals and practices.
7. **Postsecondary Connections** – Align PK-16 learning pathways and blend secondary and postsecondary learning experiences. Establish proficiency-based secondary graduation requirements and align secondary graduation requirements with postsecondary entry requirements.

For brief examples of how these recommendations might change the learning experience, see Appendix A. The State Board of Education is in the process of reviewing and prioritizing these recommendations for implementation. In anticipation of this, the Department of Education has engaged in its own process of redefinition and prioritizing their work.

Reprioritizing the Work of the Vermont Department of Education

Why Do Things Differently?

> *Thinking differently about what we do and how we do it – moving from theory to practice.*

Vermont State Board of Education Transformation goals require a new emphasis on the part of Department of Education staff that models the tenets of transformation, supports the strategies and goals defined, and positions the department to increase support for schools in ultimately improving outcomes for all Vermont learners.

Unfortunately, the current economic situation has left the department with over a 20 percent rescission in staffing. Concurrently, requirements from the U.S. Department of Education increasingly emphasize statewide reform and systematic efforts for a) improving the lowest performing schools, b) increasing achievement levels for all students, c) implementing data systems to assess student outcomes and improve instruction, and d) increasing teacher and principal effectiveness.

In a recent analysis involving 99 percent of Department of Education staff, 92 percent of staff said the current "one-deep" structure reinforces working in isolation and makes it difficult to collaborate and have a coherent presence and force in the field and in our educational system. Our lack of coherent purpose and structure often results in uncoordinated and sometimes conflicting efforts. Most department staff said they would like to change that reality.

In order to respond productively to these forces, we at the Department of Education must refine our focus, our way of working and our interactions with each other, our partners and other Vermont educators.

How We Intend to Do Things Differently

The structure we have defined is intentionally focused on mobilizing all of our staff to –

1. *Support schools in improving instruction and learning outcomes for all students.*
2. Organizing our work differently by forming school support teams comprised of multiple consultants with varying areas of educational expertise and working together both vertically and horizontally:

   a. Vertically – multidisciplinary teams designed to work with school and supervisory union leadership teams to implement evidence-based practices from Pre-K to college and workforce designed to increase relevance, improve achievement and create success for all learners. Highest priority for support will be given to schools identified for not achieving adequate yearly progress. In particular we will emphasize those identified over multiple years with a focus on strategies demonstrated to create success in closing achievement gaps for children in poverty, with disabilities and/or English language learners and eliminating high school drop outs. These efforts will incorporate monitoring and supervision information gleaned from an assessment of school operations against current standards and regulatory requirements.
   b. Horizontally – stay current on best practice in areas of related expertise, learn new skills and practices and bring all of this to bear on our school support, general supervision and teacher and student standards development work.
3. Ensuring that Finance, IT, legal, HR, communications, are well integrated and support our ability to operate as a holistic system, all focused on the common goal of increasing learning opportunities for our children.
4. Providing general oversight and monitoring use of federal and state funds and application of regulation will be provided by Department staff in a way that assists educators and administrators in making informed decisions on effective use of funds to improve instruction and student learning.
5. Defining standards, assessments, and researching and sharing best practice information with consultants supporting schools and educators provides reflection on practice and also keeps us forward focused and learning as we are teaching.
6. Defining standards for teachers and principals to implement best practice and using licensure, educator preparation and ongoing professional learning to guide leadership development and reinforce best practice is critical to sustained learning and innovation for our children.

To this end, the Department is reprioritizing its work and restructuring working relationships to facilitate a statewide system of support that improves instruction and learning outcomes for all Vermont learners and functionally recognizes the continuum of education from early childhood

to young adulthood and beyond. The Department embraces the following principals as we redefine our work –

- Communication, collaboration, cooperation, and coordination.
- High expectations for every one of our students – not just some.
- Purposeful engagement of our partners in the field – new and old.
- Developing new opportunities for leadership in education in Vermont.

The New Team Structure[10]

Integrated Support for Learning – *High quality instruction and leadership support make the most significant difference in student achievement.*

Content, grade level, special education, Educational Support System, special populations and programs, safe schools and school improvement consultants work together to create integrated teams of consultants with expertise in supporting schools to implement evidence based practices, school-wide improvement and prevention models to improve instruction and learning for every child in Vermont.

This division functions as one team but will be organized to provide emphasis in the following ways: 1) supports for early childhood through middle grades, and 2) supports for middle grades through post-secondary, focusing efforts on practices and models shown to be most effective in those environments. For years, we have attempted to improve high schools in our state to no real avail. Statewide change requires a comprehensive team of individuals with the skills, mindset, and drive to move this work forward across all secondary schools and Career and Technical Education centers. Yet, we also need a continuum of consultation that starts with early childhood and focuses on best practice implementation in the primary grades and creates a bridge from primary through middle to secondary. With this dual emphasis the priorities are clearer.

School support teams will emphasize best practice implementation, sustainability, and scalability. Therefore much of our work will be around building supervisory union and regional capacity to sustain high quality instruction and high expectations for learning for all students.

[10] Center on Instruction and Improvement. (2007). Redding, Sam; Walberg, Herbert J., *Handbook on Statewide Systems of Support.* Academic Development Institute.

Additionally, all schools will be assigned one primary contact from these teams for purposes of communication, technical assistance, and planning.

General Supervision – *Proactive support, guidance and accountability systems share common strategies, methodologies and skill sets and more effectively engender long-term improvement.*

We will build capacity to provide proactive, coherent oversight to schools and supervisory unions by bringing federal funding oversight teams together in one division to create a comprehensive approach to use of federal funds; maximizing funds to complement state funds and implement best practice in the field. Best practices in focused monitoring will be applied across programs, with multidisciplinary teams deployed to increase capacity and coherence. Teams will focus on building supervisory union and regional capacity for federal programs and state regulatory implementation and internal expertise and problem solving to ensure sustained compliance. Department general supervision oversight teams interface directly with integrated support teams to strengthen the effectiveness of preventive efforts, action planning and remediation.

Educator Quality and Licensing - *The essentialness of well prepared, supported educators and leaders in the field – we know this makes the single greatest difference in the educational lives of our children.*

High quality teaching standards tied to evidence based teaching practices and content standards provide a foundation for teacher preparation and effectiveness. The Educator Quality Division will focus on strengthening connections between educator standards development and teacher preparation programs, increase access to alternate pathways to licensure and reciprocity with New England states, and develop regional and state capacity for providing high quality educator and leadership professional learning programs.

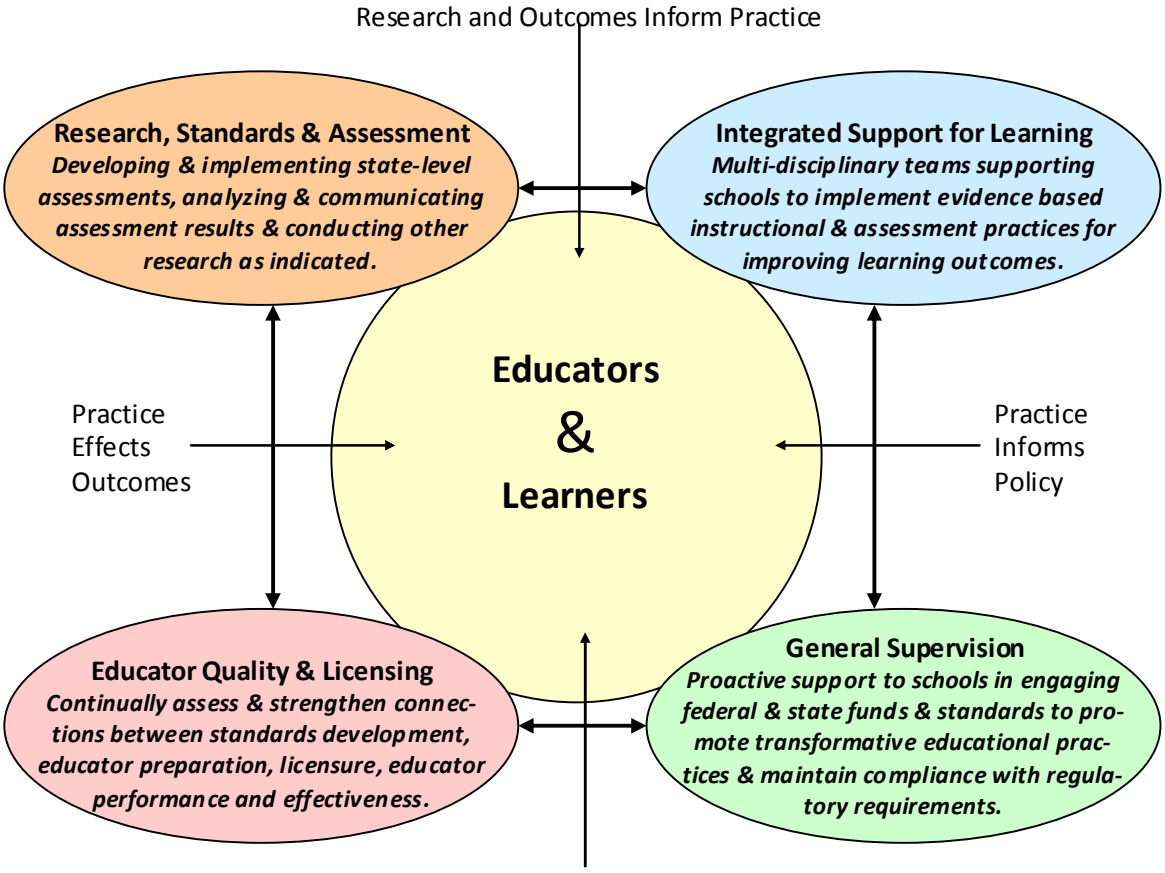
Research, Standards, and Assessment – *High quality standards and assessments provide a framework for teaching and learning. Ongoing research into best practice and learning outcomes continually informs the standards development and implementation process.*

The Standards and Assessment team will focus on an effective implementation plan for engaging educators in the field in and facilitating all schools adopting and implementing state standards including the K-12 common core standards and accompanying assessments. This team will

continue to maintain the NECAP and NAEP systems concurrently during the transition period. Additionally, this team will be engaged with other divisions to analyze the effectiveness of instructional practices and implement current and future research findings.

Project Teams – Project teams are an effective way of bringing diverse individuals together to focus on a time limited objective or body of work. We will continue to form project teams to address these areas as they arise, encouraging the engagement of partner organizations and agencies in this work.

The diagram below provides an overview of this plan -



Operational Management, School Finance, Legal, Communications and Information Technology Support , Inform and Guide the System

Diagram of Vermont Department of Education Structure – January 2010[11]

[11] National Implementation and Research Network (2005), *Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature. Blasé, Karen A., Fixsen, Dean L.,Friedman, Robert M., Naoom, Sandra F., Wallace, Frances.* University of South Florida

Funding to Support Transformative Education

In theory, it should cost no more to support a transformed educational system than it does now. In practice however, there are significant upfront costs associated with change of this magnitude:

1. The staffing cost of researching and planning for implementation of new practice while maintaining old practices.
2. The cost of upgrading data systems and technology to provide the information and tools necessary to drive instructional improvements.
3. The costs of providing professional learning opportunities to existing educators.
4. The costs of renegotiating contracts to provide for new learning opportunities for educators, to provide for increased time for teacher collaboration and student learning.
5. The costs of retrofitting facilities to be more conducive to learning technology and structures.

We would be remiss in looking at the investment costs without looking also at the savings and benefits:

1. Increased numbers of students with disabilities able to access the regular education curriculum independently in the classroom thereby decreasing special education costs.
2. Increased numbers of students staying in school rather than dropping out or ending up in the juvenile justice system, therefore reducing the numbers of students requiring expensive alternative programs and services.
3. Increased numbers of students in poverty, with disabilities and English language learners graduating with the ability to succeed in college and the competitive workforce, thereby decreasing the numbers of adults and families requiring assistance and increasing state revenues through a strengthened workforce.
4. Increased numbers of high school and college graduates available to support viable business migration to Vermont.
5. Increasing numbers of young people seeing Vermont as a place to not only grow up, but to work and raise families of their own.

In addition to the incremental American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding, several opportunities exist on the horizon which may support this work over the next three to five years (see Appendix C). They include:

1. Vermont Data Enhancement Project (V-DEP) a competitive longitudinal data systems grant proposal of $15 million to support statewide longitudinal data system implementation.
2. New England Secondary School Consortium Phase II funding for implementation.
3. Race to the Top competitive grant.
4. Innovation and What Works federal competitive grant opportunities for districts.
5. Federal School Improvement Grant through Title I
6. Potential savings through re-districting and regionalization of services at the local level.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this document, the emphasis was on alignment. In fact, an alignment was conducted (see Appendix B) across the major bodies of work on which the department and State Board and department are currently focused – *the Opportunities to Learn Report, the Strategic Plan, the Roots of Success research study, and the Race to the Top competitive grant proposal.* Understandably, the desire for alignment comes in response to the growing concern over how we are going to use limited resources to do more for our young people. As a result, we want to make sure all of our work is headed in the right direction or is *aligned*. In retrospect however, it becomes clear that alignment will not be enough. In alignment, we might be able to set things next to one another and find commonalities – a belief that one will ultimately serve the other. In alignment, as long as we are going in the same direction we don't actually have to work together. We could actually just keep working separately in our own worlds – toward common goals maybe – but in alignment, things are clean and linear. We are just ensuring one *thing* does not impede the progress of the other.

What if we were to think instead of *convergence*? What if we were to think of reaching across organizations and agencies in very purposeful ways designed to ensure that we are all working to compel the common goal forward? Instead of working only to ensure that our goals are aligned while our views on how we get there differ so greatly; instead of working to ensure that we don't bump into each other too violently in this messy business of systems change, what if we did what

we came to work to do and converged our efforts on the common goal of improving instruction and learning and the long term success of *all* of our young people?

Converging as opposed to aligning our efforts means everyone gives some ground. Policies and systems are redesigned in ways that move the transformation forward quickly. W*hite elephants* are identified and new common ground is established. In convergence, one process is designed to compel another forward. As we form commissions to craft an implementation plan for our goals, let us continue to think as boldly as the Transformation Policy Commission did in crafting its recommendations. Let us think not of stakeholder *representation* as we decide who is going to sit on these commissions to define a plan for making the recommendations a reality for Vermont learners. Let us think instead of engagement. Let us engage individuals from stakeholder groups who can think and act boldly yet thoughtfully to move this work forward. Let's change the conversation from making sure our own stakeholder needs are met to melding our efforts in ensuring the goals for our children are met. Our conversations should be about the young people we are trying to serve. Our conversations could be about finding the most efficient and effective ways to converge our efforts in order to help our children learn and grow. Everything else is secondary.

APPENDIX A - TRANSFORMATION OVERVIEW

DEFINING CHANGES AT THE STUDENT, TEACHER, AND SCHOOL LEVEL
As excerpted from the Transformation Policy Commission Report – Opportunity to Learn, 2009

Expanding from	Moving to
• Some students achieve	• All learners achieve
• 20th century academics	• 21st century academics + 21st century skills
• Expectations vary for different cohorts	• Every learner graduates college-ready
• "Stand and deliver" curriculum; limited options for students	• Personalized, flexible learning options; expanded opportunities for learners
• Separate disciplines	• Interdisciplinary learning
• Rote memorization of facts; content mastery; answers; "mile wide/inch deep"	• Deep understanding of core concepts & higher-level thinking; questions; experiential
• Common sense; thesis	• Imagination; synthesis
• High reliance on tests and quizzes	• Demonstration of proficiency through application of knowledge/skills in real world tasks/projects
• School-based instruction	• Community/world-based learning
• Age-based grade level cohorts	• Stages of learning progression
• Too many students disengaged	• All learners active
• Teacher as expert; dogma	• Teacher as facilitator of learning; discovery
• Teachers as workers	• Teachers as professional knowledge leaders
• Individual, short-term professional development	• Systemic, substantive, job-embedded professional development
• School administration	• Educational leadership
• Public school compliance	• Education quality and continuous improvement in learner outcomes
• Inputs	• Outcomes
• Funding mechanisms limit options	• Funding leveraged more effectively regionally

APPENDIX B

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">FOCUS AND INNOVATION ALIGNMENT</th></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Opportunity to Learn</th><th>Strategic Plan Goals</th><th>Race to the Top*</th><th>Roots of Success</th></tr>
<tr><td>Learning Expectations</td><td>Redefine learning standards so they are aligned with 21st century performance demands and are fewer, higher, and deeper.</td><td rowspan="2">Goal II: Learning Expectations
Learning expectations and assessments incorporate and emphasize the knowledge and skills essential for all PreK-12 learners to be successful.</td><td rowspan="3">Standards and Assessments
Develop and adopt common standards.
Develop and implement common, high-quality assessments.
Support the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments.
Data Systems to Support Instruction
Fully implement a statewide longitudinal data system.
Access and use State data.
Use data to improve instruction.
Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools
Intervene in the lowest-achieving schools & LEAs.
Identify and turn around the persistently lowest achieving schools.</td><td>Characteristic 1
The belief that all students can succeed.
Characteristic 2
The belief that school staff is ultimately responsible for students’ success and must therefore continually improve their practice.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Student Assessments</td><td>Align assessments with 21st century skills and shift when and how assessments are conducted.</td><td>Characteristic 4
Ongoing use of data to provide feedback to staff as well as monitor and support students.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teaching & Learning Practices</td><td>Establish a teaching and learning model that emphasizes deeper learning, in-depth interdisciplinary applications, and required proficiency demonstrations, and require proficiency-based grading and graduation.</td><td rowspan="2">Goal III: Instructional Practices and Environments
Learning environments and instructional practices support multiple ways of learning, yield deep understanding and application of essential knowledge and skills, and ensure the success of every student.</td><td>Characteristic 5
A professional teaching culture that supports high quality instruction and is characterized by staff collaboration, trust among staff members, strong staff commitment and dedication, and effective paraprofessionals.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Personalized Learning</td><td>Establish a flexible education system that can support each learner to achieve at high levels.</td><td>Data systems to Support Instruction
Use data to improve instruction.
Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools
Intervene in the lowest-achieving schools & LEAs.
Identify and turn around the persistently lowest achieving schools.</td><td>Characteristic 1
The belief that all students can learn.
Characteristic 6
A comprehensive and highly functioning support system for students who struggle academically, emotionally, behaviorally, or socially, including early intervention programs.</td></tr>
</table>

Educator Quality	Design educator licensing, professional development, career ladders, evaluation, and working conditions to support transformed educational practice.	**Goal I - Education Leadership** All levels of Vermont's public education system are guided by effective, transformative educational leaders.	**Great Teachers and Leaders** Provide high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals. Improve teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance – including measuring student growth, develop evaluation systems, conduct annual evaluations, and use evaluations to inform key decisions. Ensure equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals in high poverty schools, high minority schools, hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas. Improve the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs. Provide effective support to teachers and principals. **Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools** Intervene in the lowest-achieving schools & LEAs. Identify and turn around the persistently lowest achieving schools.	**Characteristic 2** The belief that school staffs are ultimately responsible for students' success and must therefore continually improve their practice. **Characteristic 3** Effective school leadership that helps to translate these beliefs into practice. **Characteristic 5** A professional teaching culture that supports high quality instruction and is characterized by staff collaboration, trust among staff members, strong staff commitment and dedication, and effective paraprofessionals.
Systems & Structures	Establish governance, funding, policies, and learning structures to support 21st century education goals and practices.	**Goal IV: Policy and Governance** State and local policy and governance facilitate attainment of the educational practices and student outcomes articulated in the Vision.	**State Success Factors** Articulate a comprehensive reform agenda, securing LEA commitment, translating LEA participation into statewide impact. Build strong state-wide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans, by ensuring the capacity to implement and securing broad stakeholder support. Demonstrate significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps. **General** Make education funding a priority.	**Characteristic 5** A professional teaching culture that supports high quality instruction and is characterized by staff collaboration, trust among staff members, strong staff commitment and dedication, and effective paraprofessionals. **Characteristic 7** A supportive school climate that makes all students, as well as adults, feel valued and safe. **Characteristic 8** A commitment to building

			Ensure successful conditions for high performing charters and other innovative schools. Demonstrate other significant reform conditions.	constructive relationships with families and involving them in their child's learning.
Postsecondary Connections	Align PK-16 learning pathways and blend secondary and postsecondary learning experiences. Establish proficiency-based secondary graduation requirements and align secondary graduation requirements with postsecondary entry requirements.		**Standards and Assessments** Develop and adopt common standards. Develop and implement common, high-quality assessments. Support the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments. **Data Systems to Support Instruction** Fully implement a statewide longitudinal data system. Access and use State data to inform and engage key stakeholders; support continuous improvement efforts.	

APPENDIX C

Funding and Competitive Grant Opportunities to Support This Work

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Funding:

Since April, department staff have fielded hundreds of technical assistance phone calls and inquiries from the field and established a Web-based resource to share updates and information with our constituents. We presented guidelines and information to school administrators and school board members, and presented repeatedly to various education organizations including the Vermont School Boards Association, Vermont Superintendents Association, Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators, and school business managers statewide. Additionally, experienced programmatic staff at the department reviewed all applications for use of funds, and any use of incremental funding such as that provided through IDEA, Title I, and Title IID. Technical assistance was provided to schools throughout that process to promote effective use of funds and prevent the creation of "funding cliffs."

Summary of Current Use of ARRA Funds:

A review of these applications highlighted the following use of funds in ways which are designed to improve instruction and learning and avoid a funding cliff:

1. Coordinated Early Intervening Services – training to provide supports for students identified as at risk for special education, including implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) systems to improve literacy; implementation of Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS) to address school culture and climate issues, and provide systems of early support for students; training for teachers on use of data systems to provide early warning systems to identify students who need additional levels of support or changes in instruction; staff training in Universal Design for Learning; assistive technology to support students; staff training in identifying and supporting English Language Learners and training and materials to provide evidence based interventions in reading and math;

2. IDEA-B – purchase of equipment, assessment tools and staff development to provide them with techniques for supporting and intervening with students who have significant disabilities including autism;

3. Pass-through for School Improvement – support differentiated instruction, formative assessment, teacher learning communities, new math programs, school-wide intervention

periods, school audits, school climate issues and even restructuring of middle grades at various schools;

4. Title I – purchase equipment and software to support literacy and math instruction; support activities and online supports to increase parent involvement; provide coaching and mentoring to teachers in literacy and math instruction, formative assessment and data-based decision making; hiring literacy teacher leaders to provide job-embedded coaching and training;

5. Title IID – large-scale professional development to help teachers learn how technology placed in the hands of students in whole-class environments changes the scope of learning and teaching; purchasing "net-books" for students and providing training for teachers on use of data systems. Additionally, the department is offering a large competitive grant to address the Vermont Distance Learning Initiative, which has the potential to bring access to virtual courses to all schools across the state.

Additional use of funds in ways which are necessary in the short term, but in the long term have the potential to create a funding cliff:

1. IDEA-B – direct service in providing special education and related services to students ages 3 through 21; activities that will not create a funding cliff include purchase of equipment, assessment tools and staff development to provide them with techniques for supporting and intervening with students who have significant disabilities including autism;

2. IDEA-C – early identification of children in need of special education services;

3. McKinney-Vento Homeless – provide support to homeless student education services,

4. Title I - provide tutoring to students; provide after school homework and tutorial support; hire teachers, coordinators and para-professionals to provide instruction and develop curriculum, tutoring, and after-school programming to support students at risk of not meeting grade expectations;

5. Education Stabilization Fund – representing greatest single source of ARRA education funding, these monies were distributed according to legislative authority as part of the districts' education grant and therefore have been used largely to support salaries in retaining

existing personnel. First-quarter estimates indicate 400+ education jobs were retained or created with use of ARRA funds.

Overall, we find the ARRA funds used to date are having a significant positive impact on Vermont schools that will exceed the life of ARRA funding, in many cases facilitating staff training, equipment purchases and implementation of school-wide improvement efforts that otherwise might not have occurred.

Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Application:

The overall goal of the Vermont Data Enhancement Project (V-DEP) is to build on Vermont's current work to create a comprehensive, PK-20 longitudinal data system that includes all required data system capabilities and elements, markedly improving the ability of the education system at every level to use data to improve achievement, close gaps and achieve equity. To achieve this goal, this project will leverage and expand existing PK-12, postsecondary, workforce and human service partnerships and seek the involvement of students, parents, educators, researchers and government partners to identify effective instructional practices, inform policy, and create a culture of accountability and continuous improvement. This work will be informed by Vermont's continuing collaboration with the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut through the New England Secondary School Consortium (NESSC) in developing regionally-comparable indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of these instructional strategies and forming a multi-state research partnership.

The project is designed to meet or exceed the seven capabilities and 12 elements as prescribed in the America COMPETES Act, enable timely and accurate reporting, and provide training to stakeholders in collecting and reporting quality data and how to use and interpret data. To support this work, Vermont will carry out the following major activities:

1. Implement a uniform statewide information system toolset for all Vermont districts utilizing the School Interoperability Framework (SIF) including a portal for parents, students, and educators;
2. Develop a state operational data store to house required data elements;
3. Expand the data warehouse to include all required data system elements and increase the frequency of data loads to facilitate state and federal reporting requirements;
4. Provide stakeholder training for statewide student information system, data warehouse reports, and portal;
5. Form a PK-20 research partnership to assess stakeholder needs, develop a research agenda, disseminate findings, and institute a professional development/feedback plan to improve education system practices.

The expected outcomes of these activities include:

1. Vermont will meet the seven capabilities and 12 elements required by this longitudinal data systems grant. Specifically,

   a. Elimination of data gaps including linking teachers to students, transcript data, post-secondary data, and workforce data;
   b. Improved data exchange between the department and other Vermont agencies;
   c. Improved accuracy and timeliness of data availability;
   d. Increased accessibility to data for all stakeholders;
   e. Increased efficiency in maintaining student identifiers.
2. Vermont will have concrete strategies to ensure that the data will support continuous improvement, especially instructional improvement, and informed decision-making by school, district and education leaders.
3. Vermont will have a comprehensive research plan guiding effective and appropriate use of the available education data.
4. Statewide, Vermont will have improved efficiency and reduced burden of data collecting and reporting.

The request for this three year project is $ 15,747,810. Awards are expected in April 2010.

Race to the Top Grant Application (Priorities and Points excerpt from the application):

If Vermont succeeds in being awarded a Race to the Top (RTTT) grant, we intend to use it to further the transformation work described in the body of this report. RTTT is a one-time funding opportunity with the potential of an additional $20-75 million over four years to support school and state capacity to realize these goals. Specifically, the application must address the following:

A. ***State Success Factors*** (125 points – 25%)
    1. Articulate a comprehensive statewide reform agenda that includes a high percentage of district (LEA) participation and demonstration of progress against raising achievement levels and closing gaps, including future plans and goals for this work.
    2. Demonstrate strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans including demonstrated history of ability to do so and demonstration of support from a broad stakeholder group.
    3. Demonstrate progress in raising achievement and closing gaps including use of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to date toward that end, and longitudinal analysis of NECAP and ESEA results since 2003.

B. ***Adoption of Common Standards*** (70 points – 14%)
    1. Participate in Common Core standards adoption.
    2. Commit to adopting common assessments as part of the common core adoption plan.
    3. Support for transitioning to standards and assessments that build toward college and career readiness.

C. ***Data Systems to Support Instruction*** (47 points – 9%)
    1. Fully implement a statewide longitudinal data system that provides all 12 of the elements of the America Competes Act.
    2. Develop a plan for use of this data by primary stakeholders to inform decisions.
    3. Plans for using data to improve instruction by providing support for implementing local instructional improvement systems, including professional development for using data to support continuous instructional improvement, and research to evaluate effectiveness.

D. ***Great Teachers and Leaders*** (138 points – 28%)

1. Provide high quality pathways for aspiring teachers and leaders that include alternative routes to certification, and systems for monitoring, evaluating and addressing shortage areas.
2. Improve teacher and principal effectiveness by engaging LEA staff in developing consistent systems for evaluating local educator and leadership effectiveness that include multiple measures of effectiveness (including local student growth measures) and annual reviews to inform decision making.
3. Ensure continued equitable distribution of effective teachers through the development of plans to evaluate and ameliorate disparities as they arise.
4. Evaluate and create plans to improve the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs by considering student outcomes in the evaluation and supporting incentivizing the expansion of effective state preparation programs as they are identified.
5. Define and implement plans to provide and continuously improve data informed professional development, coaching, and induction programs for teachers and principals.

E. ***Turning Around the Lowest Achieving Schools*** (50 points – 10%)

1. Identify and define plans for intervening with the lowest achieving 5% schools. Demonstrate state regulation and policy that applies to the turnaround of lowest achieving schools and demonstrate past performance and future plans for turning those schools around and improving student outcomes across the state.

F. ***General*** (55 points – 11%)

1. Demonstrate that education funding is a priority by providing financial data that show the percent of total State revenues available to support elementary, secondary and public higher education and statute that provides for equitable funding between high need and other LEAs.
2. Ensure successful conditions for the operation of high-performing charter and other innovative schools.

G. ***Emphasis on STEM*** (15 points – 3%)

1. A high-quality plan to address the need to (a) offer a rigorous course of study in mathematics, the sciences, technology, and engineering; (b) cooperate with industry

experts, museums, universities, research centers, or other STEM-capable community partners to prepare and assist teachers in integrating STEM content across grades and disciplines, in promoting effective and relevant instruction, and in offering applied learning opportunities for students; and (c) prepare more students for advanced study and careers in the sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics, including by addressing the needs of underrepresented groups and of women and girls in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

H. ***Early Childhood*** (no points)

1. Develop a comprehensive approach to transforming early education by building on a foundation of current assets and expanding opportunities for all young children to attain positive outcomes. Of particular interest are practices that (a) improve school readiness (including social, emotional and cognitive); and (b) improve the transition between preschool and kindergarten.

I. Expansion and/or Adoption of Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (no points)

1. Statewide longitudinal data systems to include or integrate data from special education programs, English language learner programs, early childhood programs, at-risk and dropout prevention programs, and school climate and culture programs, as well as information on student mobility, human resources (i.e., information on teachers, principals, and other staff), school finance, student health, postsecondary education, and other relevant areas, with the purpose of connecting and coordinating all parts of the system to allow important questions related to policy, practice, or overall effectiveness to be asked, answered, and incorporated into effective continuous improvement practices.
2. Working together to adapt one State's statewide longitudinal data system so that it may be used, in whole or in part, by one or more other States, rather than having each State build or continue building such systems independently.

J. P-20 Coordination – Horizontal and Vertical Alignment (no points)

1. Address how early childhood programs, K-12 schools, postsecondary institutions, workforce development organizations, and other State agencies and community partners (e.g., child welfare, juvenile justice, and criminal justice agencies) will coordinate to improve all parts of the education system and create a more seamless preschool-through-graduate school (P-20) route for students. Vertical alignment

across P-20 is particularly critical at each point where a transition occurs (e.g., between early childhood and K-12, or between K-12 and postsecondary/careers) to ensure that students exiting one level are prepared for success, without remediation, in the next. Horizontal alignment, that is, coordination of services across schools, State agencies, and community partners, is also important in ensuring that high-need students (as defined in this notice) have access to the broad array of opportunities and services they need and that are beyond the capacity of a school itself to provide.

K. School Level Conditions for Reform Innovation and Learning (no points)

1. Participating LEAs seek to create the conditions for reform and innovation as well as the conditions for learning by providing schools with flexibility and autonomy in such areas as:
    a. Selecting staff;
    b. Implementing new structures and formats for the school day or year that result in increased learning time (as defined in this notice);
    c. Controlling the school's budget;
    d. Awarding credit to students based on student performance instead of instructional time;
    e. Providing comprehensive services to high-need students (as defined in this notice) (e.g., by mentors and other caring adults; through local partnerships with community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and other providers);
    f. Creating school climates and cultures that remove obstacles to, and actively support, student engagement and achievement; and
    g. Implementing strategies to effectively engage families and communities in supporting the academic success of their students.

New England Secondary School Consortium (an excerpt from the NESSC RTTT Summary):

Vermont is an active member of the New England Secondary School Consortium (www.newenglandssc.org), a nationally recognized educational partnership committed to fostering forward-thinking innovations in the design and delivery of secondary education across the New England region. The five partner states of Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont believe that bold vision, shared goals and innovative strategies will allow us to close persistent achievement gaps, promote greater educational equity and opportunity for all students, dramatically improve teacher quality, enhance data reliability and regional comparability and lead our educators and schools into a new era of secondary schooling.

For more than two years, the consortium, in collaboration with its funders and partners, has been designing, planning and implementing a variety of school-improvement strategies intended to bring greater coherence, alignment and common purpose to promoting best practices, school innovation and forward-thinking educational policy across the New England region. This combined commitment to the simultaneous improvement of (1) both school-based educational practices and their governing policies; (2) both 21st century learning standards and new skilled-based assessments and data systems that can more accurately measure attainment of those standards; and (3) both statewide systems design and the quality of classroom instruction students receive every day are all highly aligned with the objectives and four assurances outlined in the Race to the Top guidelines.

A leadership team of dedicated policy makers and state education agency staff has established high-functioning, collegial relationships within and among the consortium's five member states and partnering organizations, which include the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and the New England Board of Higher Education. From the beginning, the Council of Chief State School Officers has also been a close partner and strong supporter of the work, and recently the Education Commission of the States and the National High School Center have expressed a desire to work with the consortium on targeted projects.

Funded by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and coordinated by the Great Schools Partnership, the consortium's goal is to ensure that the educational performance and attainment of our public high school students will not only be competitive with their peers worldwide, but that every student graduates prepared for success in the colleges, careers, and communities of the 21st century. To realize our vision, the consortium

will support the development of a new generation of high-performing, internationally competitive high schools, while assisting the New England states in achieving several ambitious objectives, including increasing four-year, on-time graduation rates across the five states; decreasing annual drop-out rates; increasing the percentage of students enrolling in two- or four-year college-degree programs or pursuing accredited postsecondary credentials; and reducing the number of students required to take remedial courses during their first year of college.

Talking Points
United States Department of Education
American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Race to the Top Program:
Challenges and Opportunities for Vermont

The Vermont Opportunities to Learn report and Race to the Top (RTTT) competitive grant opportunity emphasize a similar goal:

> *"Create a policy framework that will build and enhance the capacity of schools and communities to reinvent public education so all students acquire the knowledge and skills needed for college, careers, and citizenship in the 21st century."*
>
> *- Vermont State Board of Education charge, Transformation Policy Commission, 2009*

Challenges

For the last eight months, a team of approximately twenty individuals from the Vermont Department of Education and twenty members of other stakeholder groups have been working on framing the Vermont RTTT proposal in the context of our education transformation agenda. While many parallels can be drawn between the two and alignment can be found in the overall intent, further inspection of the specific required strategies and priorities for Race to the Top highlight some inherent challenges for Vermont in this competition.

RTTT is a one-time funding opportunity through ARRA, with the potential for $20-75 million over four years to support school and state capacity to realize the United States Department of Education (USDE) reform goals. States will be selected for RTTT funding based on demonstrated success in:

- Raising student achievement levels for all students but especially for those in poverty, with disabilities, minorities, and English language learners;
- The identification and turn around of low performing schools; and
- Articulation of robust, outcome-based plans to implement identified reforms in 19 priority areas in most of the schools in their state over the next four years.

A more thorough understanding of the Race to the Top competitive grant expectations defines the following key assumptions and goals in accomplishing statewide education reform:

- State education systems are failing minority students, those living in poverty, those with disabilities, and English language learners who are largely concentrated in urban centers and must be transformed by:
    - Establishing incentives for equitable distribution of highly effective teachers and principals in hard to serve high poverty, high population, and high minority areas;
    - Rewriting teacher and principal preparation, recruitment, evaluation, retention and promotion practices to promote teachers and principals based on measures of effectiveness that include student outcomes rather than longevity and educational attainment;
    - Implementing data systems to inform instruction;
    - Implementing common national standards and assessment systems; and
    - Turning around large numbers of failing school systems (graduation rates under 60%) by implementing dramatic reforms including replacing principals and ineffective teachers and increasing flexibility at the local level.

Based on these elements, there are several areas where Vermont is likely to lose points because of the strong urban focus in grant priorities (see attached points rubric). Below, several opportunities are listed that converge with Vermont's transformation agenda, but many of these areas do not garner points in the competition.

Opportunities

Race to the Top has given us the opportunity to carry on a state conversation about these issues and to begin to frame effective strategies for addressing those areas which are also of interest in Vermont:

- Closing achievement gaps for children in poverty (particularly boys), English language learners, children with disabilities, and minorities,
- Raising graduation levels to 100%,
- Creating a statewide system of school support for improving instruction and learning,
- Strengthening alternate pathways to teacher certification,
- Creating consistent teacher and principal evaluation systems that consider student growth as one of multiple measures of performance,
- Creating a statewide system of professional development and learning designed to support and develop effective teachers, principals and superintendents across the state,
- Implementing P-20 data systems, connections, and partnerships vertically and horizontally from early childhood through K-12 education to college, careers and workforce,
- Increasing early learning opportunities throughout the state,
- Growing Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) opportunities for teachers and learners,
- School level innovation emphasizing proficiency based learning versus seat time, 21st century skill development, individualized learning pathways, use of technology, flexible school days and calendars, family and community engagement, and community partnerships to promote mentoring and internships,
- Equitable access to increased learning opportunities and innovative approaches.
- Increased funding for participating schools to implement these reforms in addition to other required reforms.

More Challenges

The final push for completion of the grant will require approximately 700-1000 staff hours (18-25 FTE weeks) between now and May 29, 2010. The department will have to focus all available resources on completing this application in the remaining timeline.

Winning the award is dependent on statewide support from Superintendents, School Boards, and unions. Currently, the opinions in the field vary widely on whether pursuing RTTT will in fact be a help or a hindrance. These discussions center largely on whether RTTT will; a) help us sufficiently with some of the challenges we face around governance and economics; and b) add to our collective administrative burdens for increased reporting and accountability in areas where because of our unique demographics the efforts might not result in the purported benefit to instruction and outcomes for Vermont learners.

Because they are not entirely consistent with one another, over the next four years we will have to work to minimize the potential for a dual focus in the department and the field on Race to the Top and Vermont's Opportunities to Learn agenda.

Race to the Top

The general focus of Race to the Top is on the following core education reform areas:

- **Standards and Assessments:** Adopt the Common Core standards and related assessments (once defined) to prepare students to succeed in college, the workplace, and a global economy; (14% of points)

- **Data Systems to Support Instruction:** Build data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can use that data to improve instruction; (9% of points)

- **Great Teachers and Leaders:** Implement systems where recruitment, development, reward, and retention of teachers and principals is driven by effectiveness (as defined by the USDE) rather than longevity or education level. Focus those efforts most in schools with high percentages of students in poverty and/or minorities; (28% of points)

- **Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools:** Identify the persistently lowest-achieving schools and support LEAs in implementing one of four school intervention models – closure, restart, turn around or transformation. (10% of points)

Race to the Top additionally includes the following selection criteria:

- **State Success Factors:** Articulate the State's education reform agenda and the LEA's participation in it; demonstrate strong statewide capacity to carry out proposed reform plans; and demonstrate significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps; demonstrate significant reform conditions including making education funding a priority, high percentage of LEA participation, and support for the implementation of high quality charter schools; (25% of points)

- **General:** Supporting the opening and expansion of high quality charter schools. (11% of points)

Optional priorities:

- Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) (3% of points)
- Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (no points)
- Expansion and Adaptation of Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (no points)
- P-20 Coordination, Vertical and Horizontal Alignment (no points)
- School Level Conditions for Reform, Innovation and Learning (no points)

Race to the Top Grant Application: Vermont Potential Points

A. ***State Success Factors*** (125 points ï 25%)

1. Articulate a comprehensive statewide reform agenda with a high percentage of LEA (district) participation that articulates a statewide agenda aimed at implementing reforms in the four ARRA education areas and improving student outcomes.
   65 out of 65 *are possible but only IF all LEAs (superintendent, school board president, and local union leader) sign MOU committing to VT's RTTT plans in the four ARRA areas.*

2. Demonstrate strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans including demonstration of support from a broad stakeholder group.
   30 out of 30 *are possible but only IF VT describes a robust plan to implement its RTTT reforms at the state level and through participating LEAs; and provides letters indicating substantive support/commitment to carry out RTTT reforms from a "broad group of stakeholders."*

3. Demonstrate progress in raising achievement and closing gaps including use of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to date toward that end, and longitudinal analysis of NECAP and ESEA results since 2003.
   20-25 out of 30 – *VT can demonstrate increased student in reading/language arts and mathematics overall, but not decreased achievement gaps between subgroups. Closing achievement gaps for these groups – economically disadvantaged, English language learners, minorities, and young people with disabilities would actually be a major platform on which to focus our work.*

   SUBTOTAL: 115-120 out of 125 (23-24%)

B. ***Adoption of Common Standards*** (70 points ï 14%)

1. Participate in Common Core standards adoption.
   40 out of 40 ï *VT has signed on to the Common Core.*

2. Commit to adopting common assessments as part of the common core adoption plan.
   10 out of 10 – *VT is required to adopt common assessments as part of a consortium of States that sign on to the Common Core.*

3. Support for transitioning to standards and assessments that build toward college and career readiness.
   20 out of 20 *IF VT describes a rigorous plan for statewide transition to and implementation of common standards and assessments (not Vermont-specific).*

   SUBTOTAL: 70 out of 70 (14%)

C. ***Data Systems to Support Instruction*** (47 points ï 9%)

1. Fully implement a statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) that provides all 12 of the elements of the America Competes Act.
   16 out of 24 ï *VT's SLDS system currently includes 8 of the 12 elements.*

2. Develop a plan for use of this data by primary stakeholders to inform decisions.
   5 out of 5 *IF VT describes a plan to ensure that SLDS data is accessible to and used by educators and other stakeholders to inform decisions and contribute to continuous improvement in policy, instruction, operations, resource allocation, etc.*

3. Plans for using data to improve instruction by providing support for implementing local instructional improvement systems, including professional development for using data to support continuous instructional improvement, and research to evaluate effectiveness.
   18 out of 18 *are possible but only IF VT provides a plan to support participating LEAs to acquire and adopt local instructional improvement systems, provide professional development on using these systems and data for continuous instructional improvement, and a research plan to evaluate effectiveness for different types of students.*

   SUBTOTAL: 39 out of 47 (8%)

D. ***Great Teachers and Leaders*** (138 points ï 28%)

1. Provide high quality pathways for aspiring teachers and leaders that include alternative routes to certification, and systems for monitoring, evaluating and addressing shortage areas.
   14-16 out of 21 ï *VT lacks a system to monitor, evaluate and identify shortage areas and preparing teachers and principals to fill these areas; this is done on a local basis and Vermont does not have policies or systems to do this. Vermont can demonstrate high quality pathways that include alternative routes to certification.*

2. Improve teacher and principal effectiveness by engaging LEA staff in developing multiple measures for evaluating student growth, and annual evaluation plans informed by multiple inputs including student growth to inform decision-making.
   58 out of 58 *are possible but only IF all LEAs agree to a plan to improve teacher/principal effectiveness by identifying and adopting high quality assessments measuring student growth and achievement; design and implement annual evaluation systems that can differentiate teacher/principal effectiveness and include student growth as a significant factor; and use evaluations to inform decisions regarding teachers/principals: professional development, compensation, promotion,*
   NOTE: *This requirement means re-negotiating all local union agreements of participating LEAs prior to RttT submission.*

3. Ensure continued equitable distribution of teachers through the development of plans to evaluate and ameliorate disparities as they arise.

15-20 out of 25 ï *VT students in high-poverty or high-minority schools have equitable access to highly effective teachers and principals and are not served by ineffective teachers and principals at higher rates than other students. Vermont does not have policies that enable moving teachers and principals between LEAs; providing incentives will be difficult. Vermont can propose some strategies to increase the number and percentage of teachers in hard-to-staff subjects.*

4. Evaluate and create plans to improve the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs by linking them to student outcomes and supporting incentivizing the expansion of effective state preparation programs as they are identified.
   8-12 out of 15 ï *VT is at a disadvantage in showing how the effectiveness of in-State preparation programs reflect data on student achievement and student growth: few Vermont teachers are prepared in-State; many teachers prepared in-State do not teach in Vermont; and most programs prepare only a small number of teachers and principals annually. It may be difficult to show statistically significant data. This in turn may make it difficult to plan to expand preparation and credentialing options and programs that produce effective teachers based on this data.*

5. Define and implement plans to provide and continuously improve data-informed professional development, coaching, and induction programs for teachers and principals.
   20 out of 20 *possible IF VT provides a plan for participating LEAs to provide effective supports as described above and a plan to measure, evaluate, and continually approve effectiveness of these supports.*

   SUBTOTAL: 115-126 (23-25%)

E. ***Turning Around the Lowest Achieving Schools*** (50 points ï 10%)
   1. Demonstrate state regulation and policy that applies to the turnaround of lowest achieving schools.
      10 out of 10 *possible IF VT describes state regulations and policies that demonstrate authority to intervene directly in lowest-achieving schools.*
   2. Identify and define plans for intervening with the lowest achieving 5% schools. and demonstrate past performance and future plans for turning those schools around.
      25-30 out of 40 ï *VT does not have historic experience on school turnaround, as evidenced by the total number of persistently lowest-achieving schools the State or LEAs have attempted to turn around in the past five years, the approach, results, and lessons learned. VT will be able to describe a plan to implement one of four school intervention models with the lowest-achieving schools.*

   SUBTOTAL: 35-40 (7-8%)

F. ***General*** (55 points ï 11%)
   1. Demonstrate that education funding is a priority by providing financial data that show the percent of total State revenues available to support elementary, secondary and

public higher education and statute that provides for equitable funding between high need and other LEAs.
5 out of 5 *IF VT demonstrates that education funding is a priority as required above.*

2. Ensure successful conditions for the operation of high-performing charter and other innovative schools.
8 out of 40 ï *VT does not have a charter school law or charter schools. Vermont should be able to show that education funding is a priority and that the State enables LEAs to operate innovative, autonomous public schools.*

SUBTOTAL: 13 (2%)

G. ***Emphasis on STEM*** (15 points ï 3%)
1. Demonstrate a high quality plan to address STEM that includes a rigorous course of study, cooperation with community partners to prepare and assist teachers in integrating STEM across grades and disciplines and prepared more students for STEM careers including addressing the needs of underrepresented groups and of women and girls.
15 out of 15 *IF VT shows a high quality plan to address STEM as described above.*

SUBTOTAL: 15 (3%)

H. ***Early Childhood*** (no points)
1. Develop a comprehensive approach to transforming early education by building on a foundation of current assets and expanding opportunities for all young children to attain positive outcomes.

I. ***Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems*** (no points)
(This is an area Vermont is already working in even though there are no points.)

J. ***Expansion and Adaptation of State-wide Longitudinal Data Systems*** (no points)
(This is an area Vermont is already working in even though there are no points.)

K. ***P-20 Coordination – Horizontal and Vertical Alignment*** (no points)
(This is an area Vermont is already working in even though there are no points.)

L. ***School Level Conditions for Reform Innovation and Learning*** (no points)
(This area and the areas above – G, H, I, J, & K are the areas where most of our Transformation work is centered.)

TOTAL POTENTIAL POINTS: 402-423 out of 500 (80-85%)